

Message Text

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TAGS: SOPN, OVIP (KISSINGER)

SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT JAMES RESTON OP-ED PAGE COLUMN THE NEW YORK TIMES WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 22 HEADED "CARTER IN A SLUMP."

2. MAYBE THE DEBATES WILL BRING HIM OUT OF IT, BUT JIMMY CARTER, LIKE PRESIDENT FORD BEFORE THE REPUBLICAN CONVENTION, IS IN A SLUMP. HIS TIMING AND EVEN HIS JUDGMENT SEEM TO BE OFF. HE LOOKS AND SOUNDS TIRED AND MAYBE OVEREXPOSED JUST WHEN THE DEBATES WILL EXPOSE HIM TO THE LARGEST AUDIENCE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN.

3. WHAT HE NEEDED AFTER 20 MONTHS OF RELENTLESS TRAVELING, HAMMERING AND TALKING WAS A REST BEFORE THE FIRST DEBATE. WHAT HE GOT WAS A WHISTLE-STOP JOURNEY ACROSS THE ALLEGHENIES, DURING WHICH HE SOUNDED AS REMOTE AND LONELY AS A TRAIN WHISTLE IN THE NIGHT.

4. HE HAS OBVIOUSLY CHANGED HIS STRATEGY. HE WON THE NOMI-

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NATION BY FIGHTING AND CAPTURING HIS OWN PARTY, BUT IN HIS

EFFORTS TO BRING IT BACK TOGETHER, IT SEEMS TO HAVE CAPTURED HIM.

5. ON HIS TRAIN RIDE ALONG THE SPECTACULARLY BEAUTIFUL ROUTE OF THE OLD BROADWAY LIMITED, THIS WAS NOT THE QUIET, COMPOSED, REFLECTIVE JIMMY CARTER WHO APPEALED TO SO MANY VOTERS WITH HIS INDEPENDENT PERSONAL VISION OF THE FUTURE. HE HAD A DIFFERENT AND UNDERSTANDABLE OBJECTIVE ON THIS JOURNEY. HE WAS THE PARTY LEADER LEADING ALL THE STATE AND LOCAL LEADERS AND TRYING TO INSPIRE THE RELUCTANT DEMOCRATS TO REGISTER AND VOTE.

6. IN THE PROCESS, HE PRODUCED SOME GOOD NOSTALGIC PICTURES FOR THE TV NETWORK SHOWS, BUT HE DIDN.T INSPIRE ANYBODY. HE SEEMED OUT OF PLACE AMIDST ALL THE CLATTER ALONG THE TRACKS; UNEASY -- AND NO WONDER -- IN THE FACE OF ALL THE LAMENTABLE SPEECHES PRECEDING REHEARSED ADDRESSES, A DISTANT FIGURE IN A FOREST OF FRIENDLY LABOR UNION AND HOSTILE ANTI-ABORTION SIGNS.

7. HIS SPEECH ITSELF WAS AS BANKRUPT OF NEW IDEAS AS THE PENN CENTRAL RAILROAD. HE NOT ONLY REFERRED CONSTANTLY TO HARRY TRUMAN BUT TRIED TO BE HARRY TRUMAN, REPEATING ALL MR. TRUMAN.S DENUNCIATIONS OF HARDING, COOLIDGE AND HOOVER, ADDING NIXON AND FORD (BUT NOT EISENHOWER), AND PRESENTING HIMSELF AS THE SUCCESSOR TO ROOSEVELT, JOHNSON AND KENNEDY.

8. HE HAD TRUMAN.S WORDS BUT NOT TRUMAN.S MELODY. CARTER IS NOT A PARTISAN MAN IN TRUMAN.S MANNER, BUT HE TRIED TO PLAY THE ROLE, STUNNING HIS AUDIENCES IN A RUSHING TORRENT OF WORDS AND STATISTICS THAT THEY COULDN.T HAVE FOLLOWED EVEN IF THE LOUDSPEAKERS HAD WORKED.

9. MAYBE THIS STRATEGY WILL WORK. IF HE CAN HOLD MOST OF THE SOUTH, AND THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND THE UNIONS CAN TAKE A FEW LARGE INDUSTRIAL STATES IN THE NORTH, HE WILL WIN IN NOVEMBER, BUT IT IS A GAMBLE. FOR IF HE PLAYS THE PARTY GAME AS STRENUOUSLY AS HE UNCLASSIFIED

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PLAYED IT ON THE TRAIN, HE STANDS TO LOSE MANY SUPPORTERS WHO SAW HIM AS A NEW AND INDEPENDENT FIGURE, UNCOMMITTED TO THE LEADERS OF ANY PARTY OR FACTION.

10. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF HE IS TOO INDEPENDENT OF HIS PARTY AND ORGANIZED LABOR, THEY MAY NOT GET OUT TO VOTE. THIS IS HIS DILEMMA: TO HOLD ON TO THE PARTY MACHINE WITHOUT BEING RUN OVER BY IT, AND ESPECIALLY NOT

TO LOSE BOTH HIS INDEPENDENCE AND A LOT OF NORMAL DEMOCRATIC VOTERS IN THE PROCESS.

11. IT IS CLEAR FROM MR. CARTER'S RECENT TRAIN JOURNEY THAT HE HAS ALREADY LOST CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT AMONG THE PRESS. MANY OF THE REPORTERS TRAVELING WITH HIM ARE GETTING TO KNOW HIM BETTER AND ENJOYING HIM LESS.

12. THEY ARE INCREASINGLY SKEPTICAL OF HIS SWEEPING GENERALIZATIONS ABOUT DEMOCRATIC ACHIEVEMENTS AND REPUBLICAN FAILURES IN THE HANDLING OF THE ECONOMY, AND THE PARADOX OF THIS IS THAT HE HAS LOST GROUND BY BEING SO AVAILABLE TO THE REPORTERS, WHILE FORD HAS GAINED GROUND BY AVOIDING OR EVADING THEIR QUESTIONS.

13. GOVERNOR CARTER'S INTERVIEW WITH PLAYBOY MAGAZINE IS ONLY THE LATEST EVIDENCE OF THIS PARADOX. IN MANY WAYS IT IS A REMARKABLE INTERVIEW AND IF READ CAREFULLY FROM BEGINNING TO END IS UNDERSTANDABLE, BUT TO DISCUSS ADULTERY AND SIN WITH SUCH EXPERTS ON THESE SUBJECTS AS THE EDITORS OF PLAYBOY REDUCES POLITICAL CANDOR TO THE LEVEL OF POOR JUDGMENT.

14. IT IS ESPECIALLY DAMAGING WHEN GOVERNOR CARTER IS STILL BEING FIERCELY ATTACKED ON THE ABORTION ISSUE AND SOME OF HIS OPPONENTS ARE EVEN TRYING TO SUGGEST THAT HIS RELIGIOUS FAITH IS SOMEHOW EVIDENCE NOT OF INNER SECURITY BUT OF PERSONAL INSECURITY.

15. PRESUMABLY THE GOVERNOR WILL HAVE A CHANCE DURING THE DEBATES TO ANSWER THESE DOUBTS AND CHARGES THAT HAVE PLAGUED HIS CAMPAIGN IN RECENT WEEKS, BUT HE IS UNCLASSIFIED

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GOING INTO THEM UNDER VERY DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES, WHEN HE SEEMS LESS SURE AND SERENE THAN USUAL. END TEXT. HABIB

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